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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3198
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RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1483
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3536
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2922
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000811

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ALLIANCE OBSERVERS ALMOST BARRED FROM
ELECTION

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Earle D. Litzenberger, Reason 1.
4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Late on July 22, on the eve of the July 23 presidential election, the Kyrgyz Central Election Commission (CEC) called in members of the Alliance of Civic Organizations regarding the Alliance's issuance of a "Final Report" on the election. Concerned about the possibility that the CEC would void the credentials of the Alliance's 3,000 domestic observers, the Charge intervened immediately with Foreign Minister Sarbayev to thwart such action. Sarbayev informed the Charge that the CEC had planned to take such a step, but, he agreed that public statements by the Alliance and the Embassy clarifying the "Final Report" issue would help resolve the situation and, in the event, that solution allowed the Alliance's 3,000 observers to monitor the vote on election day. However, the CEC also claimed the report was reissued during a blackout period before the election, and the Prosecutor General is investigating the allegation. End Summary.

Alliance Called In Over "Final Report"

12. (SBU) On the eve of the July 23 Kyrgyz presidential election, Scott Kearin, head of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) office in Kyrgyzstan, contacted the Embassy to report that the Kyrgyz Central Election Commission (CEC) had voided the accreditation of nearly 3,000 domestic observers affiliated with the Alliance of Civic Organizations (Alliance). Kearin told Embassy that Alliance representatives had been summoned to the CEC earlier on July 22, notified orally that the credentials had been revoked, and advised of issues relating to the Alliance's July 17 final pre-election report. (Note: Alliance member organizations have been the recipients of NDI and other training. End Note.) The Alliance had issued what was entitled in English a "Final Pre-Election Report," but which in Russian was called a "Final Report," earlier in July.

Foreign Minister Unaware

13. (C) Fortunately, at the time Embassy received this news, the Charge was meeting Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev, who was unaware of this development. Sarbayev, however, did indicate that the Alliance's issuance of a "Final Report" on an election which had not yet taken place raised concerns in the Kyrgyz government. As barring the 3,000 observers would severely tarnish Kyrgyzstan's reputation in the international community, the Charge advised Sarbayev that even if the report had been mistakenly labeled, "two wrongs do not make a right." The Charge suggested that Kyrgyz authorities take a positive step, keep to the high road, and not void the credentials. Sarbayev soon left, but promised to "see what I can do."

NDI Confirms "Mistake"

14. (SBU) Later, NDI's Kearin called Embassy to confirm that there had been a "mistake" in the report's title, but also mentioned that Kyrgyz authorities had raised questions about the timing of the report's release. Specifically, Kyrgyz authorities pointed to internet publication of the report within a pre-election window that bars such statements being made. Kearin argued that the Alliance issued this report before the deadline established in the electoral code, and said that the internet site that reissued the report was not under the Alliance's control.

Press Statements Attempt to Clarify

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15. (C) FM Sarbayev later informed the Charge that the CEC planned to void the Alliance's credentials, but that he had intervened to prevent this step. However, he requested that the Alliance and the Embassy both issue statements clarifying the title issue. The Charge contacted Kearin who agreed that such a step could be arranged, and the Charge communicated this agreement to Sarbayev, as well as Embassy's agreement to issue a related statement. In Embassy's view, these actions ensured participation of the Alliance observers in the election. The Alliance later released a statement which contested many issues related to the date of the report, but conceded that "the content of the report reflected the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period up to July 15, 2009, and could not contain information about upcoming events (the July 23 election)."

16. (U) The Embassy issued the following statement July 23:

"The United States places great importance on the role of domestic and international observers in providing an independent assessment of the conduct of elections. Final assessments of an election, however, can only be completed after the election has taken place. Earlier this month, the Alliance of Civic Organizations issued its last pre-election assessment of the July 23 Presidential election in the Kyrgyz Republic. Unfortunately, the Russian language version of the report was incorrectly titled, "Final Report." The Alliance of Civic Organizations has issued a subsequent statement clarifying that the report reflected its assessment of the pre-election situation in the Kyrgyz Republic, and was not its final report. The United States welcomes that clarification, and welcomes the full participation of domestic and international observers to the July 23 Presidential election in the Kyrgyz Republic."

Alliance Members Report to the Prosecutor General's Office

17. (U) On July 23, the Prosecutor General's office "invited" three key leaders of the Alliance to a meeting to discuss the

report. The Alliance representatives provided the Prosecutor General's office an "explanation" of the timing of their report and its release to mass media. They disavowed any knowledge of the new internet release of the report immediately prior to the election. The Alliance members departed the meeting, and the Prosecutor General's office has made no subsequent comments about its investigation into the CEC's allegations against the Alliance.

Comment

18. (C) Although numerous irregularities appear to have marred the election, we believe that we averted an even more serious problem by intervening to secure the credentials of this large group of domestic observers. The Foreign Minister, who played a critical role in the negotiation of the Transit Center arrangements, proved extraordinarily helpful in this instance as well.

GFOELLER